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# Central European History



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## **Flexible Fatherlands: 'Patriotism' among Polish-speaking German Subjects during the First World War**

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## Flexible Fatherlands: "Patriotism" among Polish-speaking German Citizens during the First World War\*

In narratives of Polish history, the First World War has proven to be both indispensable and indigestible. It has been indispensable because it provides the run-up to what is arguably the central event of the national drama: the “resurrection” of an independent Polish state. The war can thus be seen as providential, the “universal war for the freedom of the peoples” for which Poland’s national poet, Adam Mickiewicz, had prayed almost a century earlier.<sup>1</sup> Histories of “Poland” or of “Poles” during the First World War have thus been predictably focused on those who could serve as convincing protagonists in this recovery of national independence, above all the members of the Polish Legion, led by Józef Piłsudski, who fought as part of avowedly Polish military units and under a Polish banner. It is, for example, the actions of such

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\* A paper that formed the germ of this article was presented at a conference on “Patriotic Cultures during the First World War” in St. Petersburg, Russia in June 2014. An article based on that paper was subsequently included in a Russian-language edited volume: “V poiskakh patriotizma sredi pol'skoyazychnykh germanskikh poddannyykh, 1914–1918,” in *Kultury patriotizma v period Pervoy mirovoy voyny*. Sankt-Peterburg, 2018. This article is a substantially revised revised version of that contribution to the edited volume.

<sup>1</sup> Adam Mickiewicz, “The Pilgrim’s Litany,” in *Poems by Adam Mickiewicz*, trans. Dorothea Prall Radin, ed. George Rapall Noyes (New York: Polish Institute of Arts & Sciences in America, 1944), 414-5.

soldiers—and only the actions of such soldiers—that are explicitly commemorated on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Warsaw.<sup>2</sup>

But alongside this indispensable narrative of the war as prelude to independence, there has been the indigestible story of what most Poles actually did during the war. Between 1914 and 1918, over three million men from the territory of interwar Poland—more than one hundred times the number who enlisted in the Polish Legions<sup>3</sup>—served in the regular armed forces of Germany, Austria-Hungary, or Russia.<sup>4</sup> If the defining moment in the normative Polish wartime biography, modeled

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<sup>2</sup> The military engagements inscribed on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier mostly involved the Polish Legions, who fought alongside Austro-Hungarian forces. But the list also includes some actions by Polish units that fought alongside Russian imperial forces in the early years of the war, as well as some engagements in 1918, following the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, involving Polish Corps organized from a mix of former Legionnaires and troops from the former Russian imperial army that fought against German forces.

<sup>3</sup> The peak strength of the Polish Legions (at the beginning of 1917) was 21,000, with 12,600 involved in actual fighting. An additional 18,000 soldiers were recruited to Polish units fighting alongside the Russian army. Julia Eichenberg, *Kämpfen für Frieden und Fürsorge: Polnische Veteranen des Ersten Weltkriegs und ihre internationalen Kontakte, 1918-1939* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2011), 29-30.

<sup>4</sup> Andrzej Gawryczewski, *Ludność Polski w XX wieku* (Warsaw: Polska Akademia Nauk, 2005), 411. The total figure cited here—3,375,800—included 779,500 serving in the Germany army, 1,195,800 serving in the Russian army, and 1,401,500 serving in the Austro-Hungarian army. These numbers are based on the total population of the

on the career of Pilsudski, was a demonstrative refusal to swear direct allegiance to the partitioning powers, the wartime biographies of the overwhelming majority of military-age Polish men were defined by a willingness to do precisely that. Forms of support for the imperial war efforts among women and men not subject to conscription would have been more diffuse—e.g., contributions to economic production; subscription to war loans; acceptance of privation on the home front—but again far more ubiquitous than overt Polish-patriotic activity. How are we to make sense of this service to imperial powers during a war that ostensibly led to national liberation? Could it be explained by straightforward coercion, making it a matter of abject compliance rather than active loyalty? Alternately, was it an indirect and tragic, but nonetheless genuine, expression of devotion to the Polish national cause, an acceptance of a fratricidal division of labor aimed at laying the groundwork for eventual independence? Or did mass sacrifice for the German, Habsburg and Russian empires instead suggest that Polish national sentiment among the general population was weaker than often supposed?

In exploring this puzzle, my particular focus in this essay will be on what might seem its most puzzling single manifestation: support for the German war effort

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territory of Poland c. 1922. They would therefore include a large proportion of inhabitants, especially in former Russian and Austro-Hungarian territory, who were not primarily Polish-speaking. They would also exclude a smaller number of Polish-speakers from areas such as western Upper Silesia and Masuria that did not become part of interwar Poland. In ethnolinguistic terms, then, there may have been more Polish-speaking soldiers in the German army than in either of the other two imperial armies.

by people who spoke Polish as a native language and showed at least some signs of sympathy for the Polish national cause. Germany, after all, was the imperial power that most closely resembled a nationalizing state. Unlike the Habsburg Monarchy, and much more effectively than the Russian Empire, Germany had sought the linguistic homogenization of its residents in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with transmission of Polish language and culture explicitly targeted for curtailment.<sup>5</sup> But although German victory was the outcome that may have seemed the least compatible with Polish national aspirations, it was, already by the autumn of 1915, the outcome that looked most likely to happen, at least in Eastern Europe. If Polish interests were to be accommodated at all after the war, it seemed that they would have to be accommodated within the framework of a German-dominated Mitteleuropa. Polish-speaking citizens of the German Empire played crucial mediating roles in this process, both in the form of high-profile publicists, who were given privileged access to the periodical market in the lands of occupied Russian Poland, and in the form of regular soldiers, who wore the uniform of the German army but spoke the language of the local population. Contemporaries as well as subsequent commentators struggled to assess both the ultimate loyalties of those playing these ambiguous roles and the impact of their actions. This essay will certainly not resolve all of these questions. But it will suggest some approaches for examining apparently mutually exclusive German and Polish loyalties as instead being—at least in some contexts—mutually

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<sup>5</sup> For a recent account of Imperial Germany as a nationalizing empire, see Stefan Berger, “Building the Nation Among Visions of German Empire,” in Stefan Berger and Alexei Miller, eds., *Nationalizing Empires* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2015), 247-308, especially 253-4 on Germanization.

constitutive, depending on and informing one another rather than serving as alternative orientations.

The term “patriotism” will feature prominently in this analysis, so an explanation of my working definition is in order. The word is often deployed in a normative sense, denoting a good (tolerant, defensive) version of love of country, explicitly or implicitly contrasted with nationalism—the bad (bigoted, aggressive) version.<sup>6</sup> My own use of patriotism and nationalism as analytical terms has a different aim, building on distinctions developed in recent scholarship on nationalism. Nationalism, reflecting Ernest Gellner’s well-known definition, refers to support for a nation-state, in which the political community (the state) and the cultural community (the nation) are made congruent.<sup>7</sup> Patriotism refers more broadly to allegiance to any political community, whether or not it fits the model of a nation-state. This is a familiar distinction for historians of the Habsburg empire, who commonly refer to an “imperial” or “dynastic” state patriotism that co-existed in tension with linguistic

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<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the most famous normative distinction between patriotism and nationalism was put forward by George Orwell in his essay “Notes on Nationalism” (1945). For Orwell, nationalism did not necessarily have anything to do with nations but simply denoted a “desire for power” on behalf of any group. Patriotism, in turn, was defined as any form of loyalty or identification that remained “defensive” and avoided such aggressive overreach.

<sup>7</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 1-7.

nationalisms.<sup>8</sup> For historians of Czarist Russia, the distinction between imperial state patriotism and Russian nationalism is subtler, but the former has often been treated as an important and distinct phenomenon among non-Russian speakers.<sup>9</sup> Imperial patriotism is also a widely used concept in scholarship on the British empire.<sup>10</sup> One historian has used the concept of “empire loyalism” to compare the attachments of Scots to the British empire and Ukrainians to the Russian empire.<sup>11</sup>

Among historians of Wilhelmine Germany, by contrast, this understanding of “imperial patriotism” has been largely absent. Recent discussions of Germany-as-empire have instead focused on forms of racist domination and exclusion that would seem to have precluded any form of participatory patriotism among non-

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<sup>8</sup> For example: Laurence Cole, *Military Culture and Popular Patriotism in Late Imperial Austria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Daniel Unowsky, *The Pomp and Politics of Patriotism: Imperial Celebrations in Habsburg Austria, 1848-1916* (Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> In her recent book, Melissa Stockdale defines patriotism as “love of and loyalty to one’s patria—that is, traditional, state-based patriotism”. *Mobilizing the Russian Nation: Patriotism and Citizenship in the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 10. She devotes a section to the ways in which Polish-speakers were “rehabilitated, honoured, and embraced” as essentially loyal Russian subjects/citizens during the war (170).



Germans.<sup>12</sup> This focus is certainly understandable, given the later unfolding of Nazi racist empire-building. But what it fails to do justice to, and what this article aims to illuminate, is the prevalence among both ordinary Polish-speaking German subjects and Polish-language publicists of a “Habsburg” approach to patriotism, one that sought to decouple loyalty to the state from identification with a cultural nationality. It was an approach that proved unsuccessful in the long-run and came to appear hopelessly naïve. But in the rapidly evolving context of the war, I argue, it represented a plausible bid by Polish-speakers to claim rights and exercise power as national and imperial projects, and the relationship between them, were being reimagined.

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<sup>10</sup> For a wide-ranging discussion of varieties of patriotism in the British context, see David Monger, *Patriotism and Propaganda in First World War Britain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012). Monger examines identification with the broader British empire (especially the Dominions) alongside identification with other Allied powers (especially the United States and France) under the term “supranational patriotism” (92-3).

<sup>11</sup> Stephen Velychenko, “Empire Loyalism and Minority Nationalism in Great Britain and Imperial Russia, 1707-1914: Institutions, Law and Nationality in Scotland and Ukraine,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39, no. 3 (July 1997), 413-441.

<sup>12</sup> Edward Ross Dickinson offers a useful overview of recent debates about “empire” in German historiography in “The German Empire: An Empire?” *History Workshop Journal* 66 (Autumn 2008), 129-162.

*Between Compliance and Defiance: Interpreting the Behavior of Polish-speaking German Soldiers*

In the summer of 1914, government officials across Europe anxiously monitored popular reactions to the approach of war. What they observed, and what historians have subsequently continued to re-evaluate, was a complicated landscape that often failed to correspond with expectations. Civilian and military authorities in the eastern provinces of Germany had anticipated possible resistance to the call to arms among the Polish-speaking population. Instead they reported almost universal compliance. The president of the district of Oppeln (Upper Silesia) was especially effusive, describing the typical Polish-speaking soldier from his district as “animated by the same enthusiasm and love of the Fatherland as his German compatriot.” The president of the province of Posen, a heartland of historic Poland and thus a focus of special concern for German officials, was scarcely less emphatic in writing that local Polish-speakers exhibited a “completely patriotic and loyal attitude.”<sup>13</sup> One Polish historian detected a “tinge of surprise” in the letters of Landräte (county administrators) in Upper Silesia observing that “the Poles are behaving neutrally and peacefully.”<sup>14</sup> Reports from West Prussia, another region that used to be part of the old Commonwealth, were at first more alarmist, with some local inhabitants said to be

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<sup>13</sup> Alexander Watson, “Fighting for Another Fatherland: The Polish Minority in the German Army 1914-1918,” *English Historical Review* 126, no. 522 (October 2011), 1142-3.

<sup>14</sup> Marek Czapliński, *Adam Napieralski, 1861-1928: biografia polityczna* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1974), 183.

avoiding the draft—the only area of the Reich where this was evident.<sup>15</sup> But taking into view a fuller range of official accounts, it seems clear that this was a misleading first impression of “panicking” authorities. West Prussian Landräte offered reassurance that not only was mobilization proceeding smoothly overall but a “not inconsiderable number of Poles” were volunteering.<sup>16</sup>

If resistance to the call to arms was vanishingly rare, even among populations viewed with habitual suspicions, the opposite reaction—enthusiastic celebration of the outbreak of war—was also relatively uncommon. Karol Małłek, a resident of Mazuria (southern East Prussia), a Polish-speaking but predominantly Protestant region that had been ruled by the Hohenzollerns since the sixteenth century and therefore had impeccable loyalist credentials, was an adolescent when the First World War broke out. In a later memoir, he did not describe any resistance to the call to arms, but recalled that mobilization was accompanied by fear and sadness: “Everyone cried and wailed: wives for husbands, mothers for sons.”<sup>17</sup> Such a characterization was, to be sure, very much what one would expect from a post-war Polish-patriotic and socialist memoir. But it dovetails convincingly with recent historiography re-evaluating the idea that a rapturous “spirit of 1914” swept Germany, and perhaps Europe more broadly, as the continent’s great powers headed to war. In his study of public responses in Germany in July and August 1914, Jeffrey Verhey found that

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<sup>15</sup> Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 95.

<sup>16</sup> Watson, “Fighting,” 1143.

<sup>17</sup> Karol Małłek, *Z Mazur do Verdun: Wspomnienia 1890-1918* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1967), 175-6.

outpourings of patriotic, jingoistic exuberance were limited to a rather narrow milieu of young, educated, middle-class urban residents. Other demographic groups, including the working class but also the rural population, tended to respond to the outbreak of the war with fear and unease.<sup>18</sup> In his study of rural Bavaria during the First World War, Benjamin Ziemann similarly concluded that “people responded to the announcement of German mobilization with much despondency and pessimism.”<sup>19</sup> Similar patterns unfolded in the Habsburg Monarchy, unsettling some familiar stereotypes. Fears that certain nationalities, such as the Czechs, would defy a call to arms, proved unfounded: mobilization of Czech troops was, in the words of one historian, “faultless.” At the same time, there was little evidence that groups with a reputation for imperial loyalty, such as the Slovenes, were enthused about going to war. In her study of the wartime Slovene lands, Pavlina Bobič found that the most common sentiment in the summer of 1914 was “distress—fear in the face of the unknown.”<sup>20</sup> It is not surprising that the term “pragmatic conformity,” which the historian Rok Stergar used to describe the attitude of Slavic recruits in the Habsburg military, has been picked up by the Polish historian Ryszard Kaczmarek as an equally

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<sup>18</sup> Verhey, op cit.

<sup>19</sup> Benjamin Ziemann, *War Experience in Rural Germany 1914-1923*, trans. Alex Skinner (New York/Oxford: Berg, 2007), 19.

<sup>20</sup> Pavlina Bobic, *War and Faith: The Catholic Church in Slovenia* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 32.

apt descriptor of the attitudes of Polish-speaking recruits in the Hohenzollern military.<sup>21</sup>

Nonetheless, old stereotypes, identifying certain groups as inherently "unreliable", soon resurfaced. By 1915, German officials were again voicing alarm that Polish-speaking soldiers, especially those from Posen and West Prussia, regions that had been part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth prior to its eighteenth-century partition, were exhibiting a greater tendency to desert or allow themselves to be captured. In November 1915, the Prussian War Ministry stipulated that Polish-speakers could no longer be concentrated in geographically adjacent regiments based in the East, as had been the practice at the outbreak of the war to facilitate rapid mobilization. Instead, the pre-war practice of dispersing Polish-speakers into units across the Reich was revived, with the aim of preventing the formation of concentrated groups of disaffected soldiers. Given their reputation for loyalty, recruits from Upper Silesia were subsequently exempted from this policy of dispersal.<sup>22</sup>

Were Polish-speaking German soldiers actually more likely to defect than other German soldiers? Several scholars have investigated the question and have cautiously answered "yes," but a clear picture remains elusive. Even if all relevant

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<sup>21</sup> Ryszard Kaczmarek, *Polacy w armii Kazera* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2014), 50, citing Rok Stergar, "Die Bevölkerung der slowenischen Länder und die Allgemeine Wehrpflicht", in *Glanz-Gewalt-Gehorsam. Militär und Gesellschaft in der Habsburgermonarchie (1800 bis 1918)*, eds. Laurence Cole, Christa Hämmerle, and Martin Scheutz, (Essen: Klartext, 2011), 144.

<sup>22</sup> Watson, "Fighting," 1156-7. Pre-war policy is discussed on p. 1143. It seems that the policy was never applied to troops from East Prussia (Mazuria).

records had survived, no one was systematically tracking the mother tongue of deserters. The resourceful attempts at quantification made by scholars such as Alexander Watson have largely used prisoner-of-war figures as a very rough proxy for desertion, under the assumption that high rates of capture correlated with a greater willingness to surrender. These indirect estimates suggest that desertion by Polish-speaking soldiers may have been somewhat higher than average, though at least one measure indicates *lower*-than-average desertion in the late stages of the war.<sup>23</sup> Qualitative assessments from military authorities were also mixed, with some commentators insisting on the absolute reliability of Polish-speaking troops.<sup>24</sup> Vague and generic expressions of distrust, in turn, probably tell us more about the prejudices

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<sup>23</sup> Of the 712,000 German soldiers in Allied captivity at the end of the war, only 4.9 percent were identified as Poles, somewhat lower than the presumptive percentage of Polish-speakers in the German army. Among German soldiers captured in the summer of 1918, the percentage was especially low (2.8 percent), suggesting to Watson a striking rise in compliance over the course of the war. A sample calculation from a single village in the Posen region, however, produced a percentage of prisoners of war roughly twice the average for the army as a whole. Figures from *ibid*, 1160, 1164, and 1161 (respectively).

<sup>24</sup> In addition to comments already noted about near universal compliance with mobilization in the summer of 1914, Watson notes that Otto von Hindenburg insisted

of the commentators than actual behaviour by Polish-speaking soldiers.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, scholars such as Christoph Jahr and Benjamin Ziemann have characterized the scrutiny directed at Polish-speaking soldiers (as well as soldiers from Alsace-Lorraine) as fundamentally similar to the antisemitic suspicions that led to the conducting of a “Jewish census” of military participation in 1916.<sup>26</sup> To be sure, these historians have accepted that Polish-speaking soldiers were genuinely more likely to desert or surrender.<sup>27</sup> But they have also argued that, in Ziemann’s words, the “harassment and discrimination” practiced by Prussian military authorities “helped create the group of soldiers most dissatisfied and most willing to go over to the enemy.”<sup>28</sup> Alexander Watson, by contrast, began his analysis of the behaviour of

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on the “outstanding” performance of Polish-speaking troops on the eastern front: *ibid*, 1147-8. Many reports by officers drew a sharp distinction between soldiers from Alsace-Lorraine and Polish-speaking soldiers, with the former deemed disloyal, the latter reliable: *ibid*, 1154-5.

<sup>25</sup> Mention of desertion in a letter to a Roman Catholic priest, for example, was interpreted by higher-ranking officers as indicative of general incitement to treason by the clergy: *ibid*, 1148-9.

<sup>26</sup> Christoph Jahr, *Gewöhnliche Soldaten: Desertion und Deserteure im deutschen und britischen Heer 1914-1918* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998). Jahr refers to treatment of Polish, Danish, and Alsatian soldiers as “very similar” to treatment of Jews (263). On the Jewish census, see Tim Grady, *The German-Jewish Soldiers of the First World War in History and Memory* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), 33-5. On broader anxieties about Jews prevalent among German military authorities, see Brian E. Crim, “‘Our Most Serious Enemy’: The Specter of Judeo-

Polish-speaking soldiers with the assumption that, from the outset of the war, “Poles lacked the patriotic allegiances of their German colleagues.” Pointing to an apparent relative drop in rates of desertion and surrender by 1918, he went on to conclude that the steps taken by the German army to disperse and monitor Polish-speaking soldiers “successfully managed to contain Polish disloyalty.”<sup>29</sup>

One can find material in the memoirs of former German soldiers to support both of these seemingly divergent narratives. Some accounts emphasized the destructive impact of the war on an incipient sense of attachment to state and society. Paul Orlinski, a soldier born in the Upper Silesian industrial conurbation, wrote to a local (German-language) newspaper in 1919 that it was the prejudice that he experienced in the military that undermined not only a sense of state patriotism but also his incipient German-national identification. From a Polish-speaking background, Orlinski considered himself thoroughly “germanized” after having gone through the school system: “my ‘germanized’ heart burned when I was told by ‘true’ Germans [in the army] that we came from ‘der Polakei,’ ‘Oberpodolien,’ ‘the ends of the earth’

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Bolshevism in the German Military Community, 1914-1923.” *Central European History* 44, No. 4 (December 2011), 624-41.

<sup>27</sup> Ziemann concluded that “only soldiers from national minorities frequently did so [defected] together in larger groups or in quick succession.” Benjamin Ziemann, *Violence and the German Soldier in the Great War*, trans. Andrew Evans (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 94.

<sup>28</sup> Ziemann, *War Experiences*, 102.

<sup>29</sup> Watson, “Fighting,” 1139 (first quote), 1163 (second quote).



[weitvergessenen Winkel ], and so forth.”<sup>30</sup> Arka Bożek, who would later become a prominent Polish activist but was still a teenager at the end of the First World War, described in his memoirs being unsure at this point whether he was or was not a German. His subsequent process of identity formation, he wrote, was shaped by the experience of systematic exclusion by fellow soldiers: “The Germans do not consider us as their own.... To our ‘comrades’ there, we were not Germans, and so we [Polish-speaking Upper Silesians] instinctively hung out together.”<sup>31</sup>

Other post-war testimonies, however, seemed to dovetail with Watson’s suggestion that many Polish-speaking soldiers were already irrevocably hostile to the German state and could only be kept in line through surveillance and coercion. As one veteran from the Posen region wrote in a later novelistic rendering of his experiences, “the Pole carried the Prussian rifle because he had too.... When he donned the soldier’s uniform, he became a performer of orders and nothing more.”<sup>32</sup> But if one reads on, this sense of resentful detachment from the German war effort gives way to a narrative of transformation, in which Polish-speakers’ collective identity was defined by, as well as against, the experience of service in the German military. Describing the climactic battles of the summer of 1918 on the Western front, the author wrote that “the Poznanian divisions, thrown from sector to sector, never lost, on marches or in battles, the values of daring, disciplined, hardened and exceptionally obstinate soldiers. Maintained by iron discipline, educated in Prussian schools, trained

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<sup>30</sup> Paul Orlinski, “Brief an den ‘Oberschlesier,’” *Der Oberschlesier*, 17 October 1919.

<sup>31</sup> Arka Bożek, *Pamiętniki* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Śląsk, 1957), 53–55.

<sup>32</sup> Adam Ulrich, *W marszu i w bitwie*, illustrated by Leon Prauziński (Poznań: Księgarnia św. Wojciecha, 1948), 6.

by Prussian officers, Poznanian ‘boys from the country’ constituted the most physically and morally healthy soldierly material.” The author went on to describe the continuity between the discipline that Poznanians learned in the fight against Germanization and the discipline they demonstrated in fighting as part of the German army—a cohesion, he emphasized, that Poles in the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires noticeably lacked.<sup>33</sup> The story of alienation from the German state, in short, ends up being difficult to disentangle from a story of integration into the German state.

Compared to dramatic novelistic narratives like Ulrich’s, diary entries and letters to family members tended to draw out quieter ambiguities in soldiers’ everyday experiences. Consider, for example, the account that Kazimierz Wallis, a soldier from the Upper Silesian industrial region, sent to his father about having recently been awarded the Iron Cross, second class, after an encounter with Allied forces in the autumn of 1917. Wallis wrote: “I was not for a single moment trying to get an Iron Cross but rather to be able to return home, because my Fatherland might need me someday, and my life belongs to our queen [the Virgin Mary], whom I want to serve faithfully for my whole life.... I am sending the Iron Cross home today. Keep it for me as a souvenir of the struggle in Flanders.”<sup>34</sup> As the historian Ryszard Kaczmarek suggests in his gloss on this passage, such narration brings to mind Jaroslav Hašek’s character, Josef Švejk, whose bumbling subversions within the Habsburg military have generally been viewed not so much as expressions of an alternative (Czech) patriotism but rather as highlighting the absurdities of war. Wallis’s cheeky framing

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 149.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Kaczmarek, 218-9.

of self-preservation as inherently “patriotic,” coupled with the generic nature of the reference to his “Fatherland”—Was he referring to his (current) German Fatherland? A (future) Polish Fatherland?—suggest a similar sense of sceptical detachment. And yet, as the subsequent, more earnest reference to life-long devotion to the Virgin Mary indicates, even a generic, fill-in-the-blank understanding of duty to country should not be seen as utterly cynical or inauthentic. The Christian principle of “rendering unto Caesar what is Caesar’s,” after all, has been invoked to emphasize the limits of service to a sovereign authority but also to emphasize the serious moral imperative of fulfilling one’s legitimate duties to any such authority, temporary and contingent as it might be.

Modern states have, of course, aimed to inculcate a deeper identification, a sense of active participation in a state community rather than simply submission to authority. But if one considers some of the specific mechanisms involved in creating such a sense of (to borrow Watson’s phrase) “patriotic allegiance”, it is clear that they applied to Polish-speakers as well as to German-speakers. The territories where a majority of inhabitants spoke Polish had been continuously part of the Prussian state since the Congress of Vienna (and some territories considerably longer). Families in these regions had multi-generation traditions of Prussian military service, fostering identification with particular regiments and a degree of identification with Prussian military victories, from the “war of liberation” in 1813 to the Franco-Prussian War in 1870.<sup>35</sup> Polish-speakers enrolled and participated in the activities of veterans

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<sup>35</sup> Kaczmarek notes that the hundredth anniversary of the 1813 campaigns against Napoleon seem to have resonated among Polish-speaking German subjects,

associations (Kriegervereine) as readily as their German-speaking counterparts.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, the Polish press in Upper Silesia lamented that veterans groups often seem to have been more popular than Polish-patriotic associations.<sup>37</sup> But at least some members of veterans groups did not see an incompatibility between the state patriotism fostered by the Kriegervereine and a Polish cultural/linguistic national affiliation: In 1908, for example, it emerged that ten officials of the local Kriegervereine in Upper Silesia had voted for the Polish party in the recent Landtag election, leaving local nationalists to debate whether German state patriotism had been infiltrated by Polish nationalism or the other way around.<sup>38</sup>

While the ultimate political aspirations of Polish-speakers were often murky and subject to rival forms of speculation, their linguistic identity—the fact that they

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contributing to greater identification with the German military and a "fascination with German power," 51-3.

<sup>36</sup> By 1912, veterans groups enrolled 82,388 members in the district of Oppeln—one out of every five men of voting age. Stanisław Michalkiewicz, ed. *Historia Śląska*, vol. 3, part 2 (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1984), 301. This was roughly the same rate of membership as in Prussia as a whole. See Thomas Rohkrämer, *Der Militarismus der "kleinen Leute": Die Kriegervereine im Deutschen Kaiserreich, 1871–1914* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1990), 271–73. It is interesting and worth noting that there seem to have been a vastly greater number of Polish-speakers in German/Prussian veterans groups than in equivalent Austrian/Habsburg veterans groups. Shortly before the outbreak of the war, there were only 3,200 Polish-speaking veterans in the Österreichische Militär-Veteran Reichsbund (ÖMVR), only a few percent of the total membership. Cole, *Military*, 300.

were Polish-speakers—would seem to have been a more straightforward determinant of a distinctive experience within the Germany army. As Watson noted, “Poles were obliged to function in a foreign tongue” since German was the sole language of command.<sup>39</sup> And yet the realities of everyday linguistic practice were rather more complex. While no doubt often still perceived as “foreign,” German had been the language of primary school instruction for Polish-speaking Prussians for two generations.<sup>40</sup> It was thus a language with which all Polish-speaking recruits would have been familiar and in which they would have been able to communicate, even if they, in Kaczmarek’s words, “did not always speak German properly.”<sup>41</sup> Indeed, many diaries and memoirs by Polish-speaking soldiers convey the normality of everyday interaction in German. Józef Iwicki, a native of West Prussia with a middle-

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<sup>37</sup> James Bjork, *Neither German nor Pole: Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland*, (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 95. On the importance of veterans associations in cultivating a sense of German state patriotism, see Alexander Watson, *Enduring the Great War: Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 46.

<sup>38</sup> Bjork, *Neither*, 137.

<sup>39</sup> Watson, “Fighting,” 1145.

<sup>40</sup> On language policy in the eastern borderlands, see John J. Kulczycki, *School Strikes in Prussian Poland, 1901-1907* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1981); William W. Hagen, *Germans, Poles, and Jews: The Nationality Conflict in the Prussian East, 1770-1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); and Bjork, *Neither*, especially 61-2.

class background and a strong Polish identification, wrote to his mother that his German fellow soldiers, accustomed to conversing with him in German, were surprised to find out that he knew Polish and read Polish newspapers.<sup>42</sup> Arka Bożek, the son of a small farmer who would go on to become a leading Polish national activist in Upper Silesia, recalled a less welcoming attitude but reported a similar degree of ease in the use of a shared school language. “You speak German as fluently as they do,” he remembered thinking to himself after an unpleasant exchange with his commanding officer, “but they still call you a damned Pole.”<sup>43</sup>

Just as we should not exaggerate the complete unfamiliarity of standard German for soldiers of Polish-speaking background, we should also not overestimate its familiarity for German-speaking soldiers. Soldiers from various regions of the Reich were keenly aware of the differences between their spoken dialects and the school language that served as their common code. Indeed, Slavic/Polish linguistic difference was often viewed as simply one example of the army’s broader linguistic diversity, reflected in the plethora of regional dialects. Józef Iwicki expressed his frustration at this tendency of his fellow soldiers to normalize and relativize Polish difference: “they understand that I am a Pole but at the same time [think that I am] a

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<sup>41</sup> Kaczmarek, 218.

<sup>42</sup> Letter of 14 February 1915, in Józef Iwicki, *Z myśla o Niepodległej... Listy Polaka, żołnierza armii niemieckiej, z okopów i wojny światowej (1914-1918)*, ed. and introduction by Adolf Juzwenko (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1978), 42-3.

<sup>43</sup> Bożek, 54.

German, like a Bavarian or a Saxon!”<sup>44</sup> Karol Małłek, a native of East Prussia who would later become a Masurian-Polish activist, also recalled his fellow soldiers categorizing one another according to regional criteria, but he described it as intuitive rather than frustrating. Remarkably, his discussion of the role that language played in his experience in the German army did not even mention the distinction between Polish and German. Małłek noted that his unit “consisted mostly of Germans from the South: Bavarians, Badenians, Würtembergers, Alsations, and Lorrainers. There were a few Germans from the north, so-called Prussians, several Kashubians, and seven Prussian Masurians. Between these groups [southerners and northerners] there was a huge antagonism.... Various dialects were spoken, so that in a short time I learned all of them more quickly than the literary language in my school in Brodowo and until today can get by in them pretty well.”<sup>45</sup> Other Polish-speaking soldiers were as keen to comment on religious differences and solidarities as on linguistic ones. Kazimierz Wallis, a soldier from the industrial region of Upper Silesia cited earlier, gave his father a detailed account of the fifteen Catholics who were in his unit, most from Hannover. One was from near his hometown and also spoke Polish, but a different soldier, a German-speaking Catholic from Middle Silesia, was described as his “best comrade, with whom I have the best mutual understanding.”<sup>46</sup>

While standard German served as the operative *lingua franca* in regionally diverse military units, there was no blanket ban on use of Polish, and considerable tolerance of Polish conversations and even collective Polish singing tended to prevail

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<sup>44</sup> Iwicki, 42-3.

<sup>45</sup> Małłek, 234.

<sup>46</sup> Cited in Kaczmarek, 221-2.

where sufficient Polish-speakers were present. As noted earlier, the post-1915 policy of dispersing Poles from Posen and West Prussia across military units meant that such critical masses of Polish-speakers were most common among those who came from the “reliable” regions of Upper Silesia or Masuria. When those exposed to these divergent policies encountered one another, they were, predictably, confused. One soldier from Posen, embedded in an almost exclusively German-speaking unit, recalled his surprise at meeting a group of new recruits from Upper Silesia chatting loudly in their local Polish dialect. When he asked whether they were not banned from using Polish (which he thought was a general norm, based on his own experience), they replied that although they did not really know how to write in (standard) Polish, they would certainly speak “po swojemu” (after their own fashion).<sup>47</sup> This captured both the internal logic and the paradoxes of the German state’s language policy. The reference to not being able to read and write in Polish pointed to one of reasons for the perceived patriotic reliability of Upper Silesians and Masurians: the fact that they seemed to accept a degree of gradual linguistic germanization, a process much more fiercely opposed in Posen and West Prussia. Polish literacy was certainly not extinguished in Upper Silesia, thanks to informal teaching facilitated by the Polish press and local clergy, but a shift to primary literacy in German among younger generations was unmistakable.<sup>48</sup> In such a context,

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 219.

<sup>48</sup> On linguistic germanization in Upper Silesia, see Bjork, *Neither*, 89-98; for Masuria, see Andreas Kossert, *Preußen, Deutsche oder Polen? Die Masuren im Spannungsfeld des ethnischen Nationalismus 1870–1956* (Wiesbaden: Harassowitz, 2001), 55-62.



allowing some opportunities to use Polish, especially in the form of dialects used for oral communication, might be seen as a kind of safety-valve mechanism facilitating ultimate linguistic integration. Germany's delicate balance between linguistic assimilation and tolerance of limited linguistic pluralism was, it is worth noting, quite similar to policy in France in its own on-going campaign of linguistic and cultural nationalization. The French army also allowed significant regional concentrations of troops in initial mobilization, which in turn resulted in widespread use of Breton, Occitan or Corsican in particular military units. Increased regional mixing over the course of the conflict was meant to facilitate "an inevitable process of frenchification." But this ostensibly inclusive process of integration involved, in practice, the "hostile and xenophobic" treatment of soldiers who continued to use local dialects rather than standard French.<sup>49</sup>

While knowledge of Polish was a potentially isolating factor within the German military, marking a minority off from the majority, it also served, at least on the eastern front, as a potential bridge allowing communication with enemy soldiers. Hundreds of thousands of Russian troops also spoke Polish, and millions more spoke dialects of Ukrainian or Russian that would have been more or less intelligible for a Polish speaker from Prussia. This could, of course, facilitate defection to the enemy of Polish-speaking German soldiers. But given the overall dynamics of the eastern front, where German forces were far more often victorious than defeated and therefore far

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<sup>49</sup> Aviv Amit, *Regional Language Policies in France during World War II*

(Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014), quotes from 23. On language policy in the run-up to the war, see also Eugen Weber's classic *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976).

more Russian than German soldiers were taken prisoner, shared knowledge of Polish almost certainly facilitated more defections *to* German forces than defections *by* German forces. In one memoir, for example, a Polish-speaking German soldier recounted an episode in which his assurances to a Polish-speaking Russian soldier led to the surrender of more than two hundred men.<sup>50</sup>

Thus far, we have been examining the role of Polish-speakers in the German war effort at the level of individual soldiers' behaviours, experiences, and attitudes. But many of these individuals, as well as the state authorities who carefully monitored their actions, also looked to Polish activists—publicists and politicians—as potential interlocutors who could articulate what “Polish” interests were and how they might be reconciled those of the German state. The remainder of this essay will be focused on the awkward dual role played by one set of Polish activists, often described as the “conciliationists.” Domestically, within the pre-war frontiers of the German Empire, the conciliationists continued their longstanding function of representing the interests of Polish-speaking citizens. But in the new, volatile context of the war, they also served as the most active and consistent advocates of a germanophile option for the Polish lands as a whole, laying out a vision of Polish national autonomy and development under the auspices of a German-dominated Central Europe. In the process, the conciliationists ended up blurring almost beyond recognition the line between Polish-patriotic activism and collaboration, between being a Polish voice in a German conversation and a German voice in a Polish conversation.

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<sup>50</sup> Kaczmarek, 300, citing an anecdote in the memoirs of Jan Mazurkiewicz about Polish-speaking soldiers in the Russian army coordinating their surrender with Polish-speaking counterparts on the German side.

*Leading from the Margins? Prussian Poles and the Kingdom of Poland*

Anxiety among German authorities about whether Polish-speakers would comply with wartime mobilization tended to be squarely focused on the publicists and politicians who promoted the Polish national cause—Polish “agitators”, as they would have most commonly been called. There were contingency plans to arrest such “agitators” immediately in the case of a general strike or war, including figures who were considered moderate or conservative within the Polish national movement.<sup>51</sup> But in the summer of 1914, as mobilization began and war was declared, a version of the “spirit of August” seemed to embrace Germany’s Polish elites. All members of the Polish party’s Reichstag delegation voted in favor of war credits.<sup>52</sup> Polish-national newspapers were allowed to continue uninterrupted publication and were subjected to lighter censorship than in the Russian or Habsburg empires.<sup>53</sup> The sense that Polish national sentiment and support for the German war effort could go hand-in-hand was underlined by a pastoral letter issued by Edward Likowski, whose appointment as Archbishop of Poznań-Gniezno—and ex officio primate of Poland—was approved by

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<sup>51</sup> An example of one such list can be found in Archiwum Państwowe w Opolu, Regierungsbezirk Oppeln, Sygnatura 116, Oberpräsident Schlesiens to Regierungspräsident Oppeln, April 3, 1913. See also Czapliński, 181.

<sup>52</sup> Marian Orzechowski, “Działalność polityczna Wojciecha Korfantego w latach I wojny światowej,” *Zaranie Śląskie* 4 (1963), 590–1.

<sup>53</sup> Keya Thakur-Smolarek, *Der Erste Weltkrieg und die polnische Frage: Die Interpretationen des Kriegsgeschehens durch die zeitgenössischen polnischen Wortführer* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2014), 73–4.

the German government just prior to the outbreak of war. Citing persecution of Catholics in the Russian empire, Likowski called on the faithful to pray for German victory and assured those being called up for German military service that they would be fighting for a “just cause.”<sup>54</sup>

This baseline consensus among Polish-national elites is important for interpreting the wartime behaviour of the several million individual German citizens who voted for these men to represent them in the Reichstag and Prussian Landtag, who read the newspapers that they published, and who participated in the rituals that they led. The clear message being conveyed to this community by the entire national Polish leadership was that compliance with the German war effort was in the interest of the Polish nation while acts of defiance, such as desertion, were not. Beneath this broad but thin consensus, however, two very different messages were being sent about how Poles should understand the extent and meaning of compliance. One approach was promoted by the National Democrats, the most cohesive and disciplined ideological grouping across all of the Polish lands and especially dominant in the Poznań region. The other was articulated by a looser coalition of publicists known as “conciliationists” or “activists,” led by Adam Napieralski, owner of the *Katolik* publishing house and “press king” of Upper Silesia, and Wiktor Kulerski, the editor of *Gazeta Grudziądzka*, a newspaper published in West Prussia that enjoyed the largest

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<sup>54</sup> Robert Kufel, *Edward Likowski (1836-1915): Sufragan poznański, Metropolita gnieźnieński i poznański, Prymas Polski* (Zielona Góra: “Vers” Wydawnictwo Diecezji Zielonogórsko-Gorzowskiej, 2011), 487.

circulation in the Polish-speaking world.<sup>55</sup> The differences between these approaches becomes clear if we compare the coverage of the war in *Kurjer Poznański*, the chief National Democratic organ in Germany, with war-time reporting in *Katolik*, Napieralski's flagship newspaper, and *Gazeta Grudziądzka*.

During the July crisis and the opening days of the war, *Kurjer Poznański* avoided any hint of sympathy for the German government's position, instead describing the slide into war as a "catastrophe" and a "hurricane," threatening to destroy cross-partition links among Polish activists. Rather than actively exhorting readers to comply with mobilization, the editors simply noted that the "hard duress of war," in Germany as in the other empires in which Poles lived, made such compliance unavoidable.<sup>56</sup> When *Kurjer Poznański* published a list of local soldiers who had been killed in the first days of military action, the editors noted, in a striking rejection of solidarity with German co-combatants, "we are obviously only citing names that sound Polish."<sup>57</sup> *Katolik* also spoke to its readers as a nationally distinctive Polish population. But the editors portrayed loyalty to the Polish nation as compatible with sincere dedication to the German state. During the mobilization process, *Katolik* urged men who were called to arms to serve "faithfully and courageously" for "the

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<sup>55</sup> For a more extended analysis of the views and strategy of the conciliationists, see James Bjork, "A Polish Mitteleuropa? Upper Silesia's Conciliationists and the Prospect of German Victory," *Nationalities Papers* 29, No. 3 (2001), 477-92.

<sup>56</sup> "Wojna," *Kurjer Poznański*, 4 August 1914. See also "W przededniu katastrophy wojennej," *Kurjer Poznański*, 1 August 1914.

<sup>57</sup> "Piąta lista strat," *Kurjer Poznański*, 22 August 1914.

good and safety of their own families, their brethren, and our entire country.”<sup>58</sup> When the newspaper reported on casualties, it honored all of “the fallen” who had been killed in German uniform, even as it emphasized that “there are a lot of Poles among them.”<sup>59</sup>

As the war continued, the National Democrats and the conciliationists sent very different messages to their readers about the desirability of Polish-speaking civilians actively contributing to the German war effort. One of the primary mechanisms for such contributions was subscription to the war loans that the German government promoted every six months. *Kurjer Poznański* usually passed over these war loans campaigns in silence. In one instance where it did call attention to a new war loan drive, the notice consisted of a small block of German-language text, compartmentalized in the lower right corner of the first page.<sup>60</sup> The message to readers was clear: voluntary support for the German war effort was not the business of readers of a Polish-language newspaper. Readers of *Katolik*, by contrast, were exposed to much more extensive and also much more “Polonized” reporting on German war loans. The editors not only published large-print advertisements for war loans in Polish (as well as in German) but also provided explanatory articles promoting the loans as both a practical investment and as a patriotic activity through which civilians could support brothers and sons engaged “in distant fields in the fight for the fatherland.”<sup>61</sup> The rendering of these appeals into Polish and the limited

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<sup>58</sup> “Powołanym pod broń,” *Katolik*, 5 August 1914.

<sup>59</sup> “Czesc poległym,” *Katolik*, 15 August 1914.

<sup>60</sup> “Zeichnet die vierte Kriegsanleihe!” advertisement in *Kurjer Poznański*, 2 March 1916.

<sup>61</sup> “Zakupujcie trzecią pożyczkę wojenną,” *Katolik*, 4 September 1915.

deployment of the term “German” signalled that participation in the war effort did not require or indicate cultural Germanization. Potential subscribers to war loans were not described as “Germans” or the “German people” but as “German citizens” (obywatele niemieckie), and the cause to which they were contributing was not “the German nation” or even “Germany” but “our fatherland” (nasza ojczyzna), “the state” (państwo), or “the empire” (Rzeszy).<sup>62</sup> *Gazeta Grudziądzka* did not endorse war loans quite so explicitly. But on the occasion of the spring 1916 war loan, it did include a full-page Polish-language advertisement, just above exhortations to readers to subscribe to the newspaper itself, as well as a news story stating matter-of-factly that war loans were something in which “the entire population takes part.”<sup>63</sup>

The divergent messages that different Polish periodicals conveyed about what it meant for Poles to fulfil their wartime obligations to the German state were, in many ways, a continuation of pre-war debates about how invested Poles should be in the domestic politics of the empires in which they lived. The National Democrats in

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<sup>62</sup> “Piąta pożyczka wojenna Rzeszy,” *Katolik*, 5 September 1916.

<sup>63</sup> *Gazeta Grudziądzka*, 4 March 1916. Full-page advertisement on p. 4. News story, “Pożyczka wojenna i wynagrodzenia,” on p. 3. Trying to evaluate the relative uptake of subscriptions to war loans across different regions and demographic groups would be a worthwhile research project, if surviving sources are detailed enough to facilitate it. An older study by Konrad Roesler concluded that “all circles of the population” participated in war loans almost until the end of the war. Konrad Roesler, *Die Finanzpolitik des Deutschen Reiches im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Duncker and Humbolt, 1967), 166, quoted in Stephen Gross, *Central European History*, vol. 42, no. 2 (June 2009), 244.

particular continued to insist that it was possible, in wartime as in peace, to observe a minimalist sense of duty to respective imperial states while maintaining a sense of ultimate loyalty to the Polish nation. As an editorial in *Kurjer Poznański* in the autumn of 1916 argued, “Polish soldiers fulfil their obligations fighting in the armies of the three partitioning powers. Poland as such remains above and beyond the field of struggle.”<sup>64</sup> But this message, presented as the counsel of sober realism, risked seeming oblivious to the realities of total war. How could Poles view with cool detachment an “obligation” that involved killing their co-nationals while fighting under the command of their ostensible enemies? The wartime “activism” promoted by Napieralski and other conciliationists offered a more straightforward and thus perhaps more emotionally plausible approach. Rather than treating contributions to the German war effort as an abstract fulfilment of duty, the conciliationists presented the immediate results of that war effort—the German conquest of historic Polish lands previously ruled by Russia—as concrete steps toward Poland’s national emancipation. It was an explicit gamble that urged all Poles everywhere to fight energetically for the victory of the Central Powers, whether this meant redoubling previous Hohenzollern or Habsburg loyalties or renouncing previous Romanov allegiances.

Already in September 1914, Napieralski and Kulerski had signed an agreement with Matthias Erzberger, an influential Center-party politician and the coordinator of Germany’s propaganda efforts abroad.<sup>65</sup> In return for promotion of the

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<sup>64</sup> “Polacy a wojna,” *Kurjer Poznański*, 12 September 1916.

<sup>65</sup> On Erzberger’s role in directing the Zentralstelle für Auslandsdienst, which coordinated propaganda abroad within the Foreign Office, see Ludwig Richter, “Military and Civil Intelligence Services in Germany from World War I to the End of



German war effort, the Polish publishers were guaranteed regular access to the latest battlefield news to publish in their newspapers, which would be allowed to circulate in occupied parts of the Congress Kingdom (the Russian partition of Poland).<sup>66</sup> It was Napieralski who proved most adept and aggressive in pursuing these possibilities. As more and more of the Congress Kingdom came under German control in 1915, his publishing activities expanded deeper into the region, facilitated and financially supported by the German government. In May 1915, he began publishing *Dziennik Polski* (The Polish Daily) in Częstochowa. At the end of the year, he launched *Godzina Polski* (The Hour of Poland) in Łódź, with the aim of garnering a mass readership in Warsaw and other major urban centres across central Poland. In November 1916, the *Katolik* publisher also acquired the Warsaw women's magazine *Bluszcz* (Ivy).<sup>67</sup>

In the eyes of the National Democrats and many other Poles, Napieralski's close cooperation with the German government irredeemably compromised him. *Godzina Polski* was stigmatized as *Gadzina Polski* (The Polish Reptile), and there were calls to boycott it as, effectively, a "German" publication.<sup>68</sup> Napieralski himself

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the Weimar Republic," in *Secret Intelligence in the Twentieth Century*, Heike Bungert, Jan G. Heitman, and Michael Wala, eds. (Southgate, UK: Frank Cass, 2003), 4-5.

<sup>66</sup> Czapliński, 181-7. On Kulerski's approach to conciliationism, see Tomasz Krzemiński, *Polityk dwóch epok: Wiktor Kulerski (1865-1935)* (Torun: Towarzystwo Naukowe w Toruniu, 2008), 131-6.

<sup>67</sup> Czapliński, 192-7.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, 195.

would later concede that his germanophile orientation was “the least popular in Poland.”<sup>69</sup> But even historians sceptical of *Godzina Polski*’s Polish-patriotic credentials have conceded that the advantages that German patronage endowed, such as access to the latest news from the front, helped to attract a significant readership.<sup>70</sup> In a recent article examining wartime Polish debates about gender roles, Robert and Donata Blobaum had no qualms about treating *Godzina Polski* as a periodical that legitimately “represented Polish interests.” As they note, it effectively replaced the conservative and Russophile *Kurjer Warszawski* as Warsaw’s leading daily newspaper after 1915, thereby becoming an important factor in the formulation of wartime public opinion in the previous Russian partition zone.<sup>71</sup>

*Godzina Polski*’s appeal to readers in the Congress Kingdom rested on two propositions. The first was that Germany was on the brink of winning the war. Europe, the editors wrote in one of the newspaper’s first issues, was already in “the final act of a historical drama” because the Central Powers advances on the eastern front in 1915 had “a decisive character.”<sup>72</sup> These victories were, to be sure, the result of joint military efforts by the German and Habsburg empires, and the latter power might have seemed a more amenable partner for promoting Polish aspirations, given

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<sup>69</sup> From a memoir quoted by Szramek, “Ś.P. Adam Napieralski,” *Roczniki Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk na Śląsku* 2 (1930), 327.

<sup>70</sup> Czapliński, 195-7.

<sup>71</sup> Roberta and Donata Blobaum, “A Different Kind of Home Front: War, Gender and Propaganda in Warsaw 1914-1918,” in ed. Troy R.E. Paddock, *World War I and Propaganda*, (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 247-70.

<sup>72</sup> “Rezultaty,” *Godzina Polski*, 31 December 1915.

the degree of self-rule that Poles in Galicia had been offered since the late 1860s. This perception was reflected in the clear preference of the Polish Legions to work alongside Austrian rather than German forces. But the Dual Monarchy's growing reliance on military support from Germany, coupled with anxieties about whether promotion of Polish national aspirations might subvert the Monarchy's delicate internal constitution, ensured that German officials were the most important actors in determining the fate of the territory that came under joint occupation.<sup>73</sup> *Godzina Polski* emphasized to readers that Germany's recent battlefield successes reflected its underlying political, economic, and military strength, especially an impressive "ability to adjust the entirety of domestic life to the needs of the army."<sup>74</sup>

The second core argument of Napieralski's publications was that a victorious Germany would be willing to accommodate Polish national interests. This was no doubt a tougher sell, though the more relativist version—that Germany was a more benevolent potential partner than Czarist Russia—was plausible. Russian authorities, like their German and Austrian counterparts, had expressed some sympathy for Polish national aspirations at the beginning of the war. But after Russian forces occupied much of Galicia in the first months of the conflict, it did not see it as an opportunity for a revival of "Poland" on foreign soil. Instead, the occupation was viewed in pan-Slavic terms as a "reunification" of the Russian people. Ukrainian-speakers, especially the Orthodox among them, were clearly the population being wooed, not

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<sup>73</sup> Leon Grosfeld, *Polityka państw centralnych wobec sprawy polskiej w latach pierwszej wojny światowej* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1962), 156-87.

<sup>74</sup> "Wnioski," *Godzina Polski*, 12 January 1916.

Roman Catholic Poles.<sup>75</sup> The conciliationists were confident that a reorganization of the historic Polish territories under the auspices of the Central Powers would be much more favourable to Polish national ambitions. In its very first issue, *Godzina Polski* assured readers in the Congress Kingdom that “the interest of Germany and Austria demands a strong Poland.”<sup>76</sup> Readers of *Katolik* were, in turn, told that the German occupation of Warsaw had liberated the city from “Russian servitude” and had been conducted with “goodwill and benevolence.” “The future of Poland,” the editors concluded “lies in the support of the Central Powers.”<sup>77</sup>

The culmination of these hopes was the declaration in November 1916 of a formally independent Kingdom of Poland composed of former Russian territory under German and Austrian occupation. *Katolik* greeted the declaration with the exuberant headline “Poland Arises!” and approvingly quoted the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*’s description of the event as a “breakthrough moment in the history of Poland.”<sup>78</sup> The new kingdom was, to be sure, kept on a short leash by German

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<sup>75</sup> Mark von Hagen, “The Entangled Eastern Front in the First World War,” in eds., Eric Lohr, Vera Tolz, Alexander Semyonov, and Mark von Hagen, *The Empire and Nationalism at War* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 2014), 26. See also von Hagen’s *War in a European Borderland: Occupations and Occupation Plans in Galicia and Ukraine, 1914-1918* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007).

<sup>76</sup> “Godzina Polski,” *Gazeta Grudziądzka*, 13 January 1916. *Gazeta Grudziądzka* reproduced the entire text of the article from *Godzina Polski*, along with its own, somewhat more sceptical editorial gloss.

<sup>77</sup> “W rocznicę oswobodzenia Warszawy,” *Katolik*, 8 August 1916.

<sup>78</sup> “Polska powstaje!” *Katolik*, 7 November 1916.

military authorities, who tended to view it instrumentally as a source of raw material and labour, as well as, potentially, hundreds of thousands of Polish troops who could fight on the side of the Central Powers.<sup>79</sup> But a recent article by Winson Chu, Jesse Kauffman and Michael Meng has argued that rather than simply creating a “statelet” without national substance,<sup>80</sup> German administration under the auspices of General Hans Hartwig von Beseler provided genuine, if limited, opportunities for self-government. It “restored Polish participation in municipal governance [and] allowed for the re-establishment of Polish-language instruction” in local schools. Indeed, this “active encouragement of Polish national aspirations” raised alarm among minorities in the Congress Kingdom—especially Jews, but Germans as well—who feared that German policy was abandoning them to Polish linguistic and cultural domination.<sup>81</sup> If such relatively favourable policies (for the Poles) were implemented by Beseler, a Protestant Prussian career military officer, it is not difficult to understand Napieralski holding out hope that a figure such as Erzberger, a long-time sympathizer with Polish grievances as well as a confidant of Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, might encourage

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<sup>79</sup> An excellent summary of the exploitative nature of the German occupation can be found in Alexander Watson, *Ring of Steel: Germany and Austria-Hungary at War, 1914-1918* (London: Penguin, 2014), 407-14.

<sup>80</sup> Marian Orzechowski, for example, uses the term państwka (statelet) to refer to German plans to create a Polish entity out of the territories of the Russian partition, “Działalność,” 580.

<sup>81</sup> Winson Chu, Jesse Kauffman, and Michael Meng, “A Sonderweg through Eastern Europe? The Varieties of German Rule in Poland during the World Wars,” *German History* 31, No. 3 (September 2013), 318-44. Quotes from 323 and 328.

Berlin to adopt an even more strongly polonophile course.<sup>82</sup> Napieralski and his close associate, Father Jan Kapica, came to view the notion of Mitteleuropa, famously promoted by the liberal politician Friedrich Naumann, as a promising framework for imagining a prominent place for Poland within a Central Europe that would be economically and politically dominated by Germany but that would remain culturally pluralistic. Napieralski and Kapica were reportedly “enraptured” by the idea and discussed it “for hours.”<sup>83</sup>

If the notion of reconciling Polish and German patriotism through such visions was not so far-fetched, the implications of this agenda for different parts of the Polish lands and for the relationship between them were complicated, as well as somewhat counter-intuitive. Napieralski had spent his career prior to 1914 lobbying for Polish cultural rights within the framework of the German Empire. Now he looked to the lands of (former) Russian Poland as the main stage where Poland’s national future would unfold. His intensive engagement with this process from his new position as the leading publisher in central Poland represented an extraordinary expansion of influence. Indeed, the vitriol about the “collaborationist” nature of Napieralski’s activities may have been at least partly fuelled by the realization that the *Katolik* editor was now in a privileged position both to define the de facto program for Polish national revival and to denounce the opponents of that programme as themselves unpatriotic. *Godzina Polski*, for example, criticized the Warsaw municipal government’s policies of continuing monthly payments to the wives of men called

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<sup>82</sup> Bjork, “Polish,” 482-5.

<sup>83</sup> Emil Szramek, “Ks. Jan Kapica: Życiorys a zarazem fragment z Historji Górnego Śląska,” *Roczniki Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk na Śląsku* 3 (1931), 54.

into Russian military service (*rezerwistki*) and protecting their right to stay in their apartments despite falling behind on rent.<sup>84</sup> Such critiques of lingering popular “Russophilia” were similar to complaints by Polish Legionnaires that peasants in the occupied Congress Kingdom often remained loyal to the Czar and lacked a proper Polish spirit.<sup>85</sup> In occupied Russian Poland, in short, it was plausible for those cooperating closely with the Central Powers to present themselves as the architects of Poland’s resurrection and their opponents as pining for a failed Russian imperial past.

But the prominent role that Prussian Poles such as Napieralski played in establishing an autonomous Polish state under German auspices had a stark flipside. In watching “Poland” re-merge on the map of Europe, they had to accept that this Poland would not actually include the lands where all of their previous nation-building work had been concentrated. The German Empire was certainly not about to cede some of its pre-war territory to a new Polish state as part of a victorious post-war settlement. The best that the conciliationists could hope for was a set of parallel concessions in favour of use of the Polish language in the schools of Posen, West Prussia, and Upper Silesia. There was considerable optimism about such concessions through the middle years of the conflict, buttressed by the conviction that liberal, socialist and especially Catholic (Center) politicians in Germany were fundamentally sympathetic to Polish demands.<sup>86</sup> Shortly after the establishment of the Kingdom of

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<sup>84</sup> Blobaum and Blobaum, 263-4.

<sup>85</sup> Włodzimierz Borodziej and Maciej Górny, *Nasza Wojna I: Imperia, 1912-1916*, (Warsaw: WAB, 2015), 280-1.

<sup>86</sup> One article, for example, included extended quotations from Center politician Julius Bachem on the folly of trying to denationalize Prussia’s Polish population. “With

Poland, the editors of *Katolik* assured readers that this development would foster a systematic “drawing together of our nation and the German nation.” Prussian authorities would end discriminatory language laws, facilitating the “nurturing of our [Polish] nationality.” while those authorities could remain confident that “we are faithful and loyal citizens of the state to which we belong.”<sup>87</sup> Already in the first years of the war, there had been some signs that these hopes were not misplaced. Center, Left Liberal, and Social Democratic delegates in the Reichstag had joined their Polish colleagues in the autumn of 1915 to amend the empire’s association law to provide greater scope for public speeches to be delivered in Polish, a development that garnered optimistic coverage in *Gazeta Grudziądzka* as well as the *Katolik* press.<sup>88</sup>

But getting similar cooperation from the entrenched Conservative-National Liberal majority in the Prussian Landtag or from the Prussian bureaucracy proved much more difficult. The government refused to implement the removal of the language paragraph from the association law until after the end of the war.<sup>89</sup> In June 1917, when the government finally issued a decree guaranteeing the limited use of

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regard to nationality,” Bachem argued, “the heterogeneity of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy offers an edifying example.” “W sprawie porozumienia Polaków z Niemców,” *Katolik*, 10 February 1916.

<sup>87</sup> “Wobec wolnej Polski,” *Katolik*, 14 November 1916.

<sup>88</sup> “Z powodu uchwały o paragrafu językowym,” *Katolik*, 2 September 1915.

“Parlament niemiecki uchwala zmianę prawa o stowarzyszeniach, mianowicie też zniesienie paragrafu, zakazującego używania mowy polskiej na publicznych zebraniach,” *Gazeta Grudziądzka*, 2 September 1915.

<sup>89</sup> “Zmiana ustawa o stowarzyszeniach,” *Katolik*, 3 June 1916.



Polish in religious instruction in schools in the province of Posen, the measure was conspicuously *not* extended to Upper Silesia (the district of Oppeln); the Prussian education minister explained that this would be inappropriate in a region where the local mother tongue was not Polish but “Wasserpölnisch,” a derogatory term for the local dialect. Napieralski and his fellow editors at *Katolik* tried to portray the measure optimistically as a “first step toward removing the causes of dissatisfaction of the Polish population”—a larger proportion of which, they noted more caustically, actually lived in Upper Silesia than in the Poznań region.<sup>90</sup> But Napieralski’s ally, Father Kapica, described this sharply circumscribed concession as a “fiasco,” leaving the conciliationists with nothing to show to their own core constituency as a reward for loyal service to the German war effort.<sup>91</sup>

The tension between the drama of Poland’s national resurrection in the occupied east and the ongoing inexorability of germanization at home can also be seen in the diaries and memoirs of ordinary Polish-speaking German soldiers. As Ryszard Kaczmarek has observed, the tours of duty that hundreds of thousands of Polish-speaking soldiers undertook in the lands of Russian Poland during the war cut against the grain of previous migration patterns. Poles had generally moved west in search of employment; the east, by contrast, was known to Prussian Poles primarily through literary imagination.<sup>92</sup> Indeed, when Kazimierz Wallis was deployed to the eastern front in Volhynia, on the Polish-Ukrainian linguistic frontier, he described the

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<sup>90</sup> “Nauka religii w języku polskim,” *Katolik*, 28 June 1917.

<sup>91</sup> “Fiasco” from Father Kapica’s characterization of the policy in the *Schlesische Volkszeitung*, “Ks. Jan,” 56-7.

<sup>92</sup> Kaczmarek, 299-300.

countryside to his brother with reference to Henryk Sienkiewicz's *The Deluge*, a novel he may have known through its serialization in the *Katolik* press that he read in his youth in Upper Silesia.<sup>93</sup> Wallis was also stationed for a considerable length of time in Warsaw, and his descriptions of life in the Polish capital alternated between first-person identification and third-person fascination. This ambivalence began with language: the Polish that Wallis heard was "not like ours but a pure language that sounds so beautiful and pleasant that it even pleases the German." He was similarly effusive about the beauty of local landmarks (parks, churches) but nonetheless noted that he happily returned to a German Soldatenheim for cheap and reliable meals, escaping the shortages and high prices of wartime Warsaw.<sup>94</sup> As Kaczmarek observes, for Wallis, "the Kingdom of Poland had a double meaning. On the one hand, the Poland of long ago was his homeland... On the other, it was for him simultaneously enemy territory, part of occupied Russia."<sup>95</sup>

Józef Iwicki's letters reveal a more cynical attitude toward the resurrection of a Polish state under German auspices, especially plans for the creation of a Polish army under the command of the Central Powers. A native of West Prussia, and thus outside the orbit of Napieralski's press empire, he seems to have read neither the Upper Silesia-based *Katolik* press nor any of new titles published in the (former) Russian partition; instead he favoured more germanophobe, in part overtly National

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 304-5. Sienkiewicz's death on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 1916—eerily proximate to the establishment of the Kingdom of Poland—no doubt further spurred consciousness of and references to his work.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 301-2.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 299.

Democratic, titles but also, interestingly, read a wide range of German newspapers as well.<sup>96</sup> Iwicki noted with frustration that German policy “completely segregates the Congress Kingdom inhabitants (Królewniaków) from us,” and yet rather than trying to fight this compartmentalization, he concluded that “each partition zone needs to conduct its own separate politics.” Instead of trying to attach the Prussia’s Polish lands to the new Polish kingdom, local activists should aim for some kind of “separate German-Polish union” that would govern these regions and guarantee Polish language rights.<sup>97</sup> It was a conclusion remarkably close to the policy of the Upper Silesian conciliationists, despite the distaste that Iwicki and many other Polish patriots felt toward the openly collaborationist strategy of Napieralski and his allies.

This degree of convergence was, of course, shaped by a simple shared assumption: that Germany would be the arbiter of any post-war settlement in East-Central Europe. It was a common view up until the final weeks of the war. As Wojciech Poliwoda, a Polish-speaking resident of a rural community in Upper Silesia who was an adolescent during the war, recalled in a later memoir, German victories and conquests seemed “to make real the myth of Germany ruling over the entire world.”<sup>98</sup> But by the autumn of 1918, when the Germany army suffered decisive defeats on the western front, it became clear that this was a bad bet. Conciliationists such as Napieralski, who had banked most heavily and publicly on German victory,

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<sup>96</sup> The published edition of Iwicki’s letters helpfully includes a glossary of all of the (many) newspapers mentioned by the author in his correspondence. Iwicki, 301-3.

<sup>97</sup> Letter from Iwicki to his mother, 27 November 1916, in *ibid.*, 168-9.

<sup>98</sup> Wiktor Kornatowski and Kazimierz Malczewski, eds. *Wspomnienia Opolan* (Warsaw: PAX, 1960). 231.

saw almost all of their influence swiftly dissipate outside of their home base of Upper Silesia. Even in Upper Silesia, leadership of the Polish-speaking population passed quickly to more radical figures, such as Wojciech Korfanty, who had begun criticizing German policy more outspokenly in the later years of the war and who now called for immediate union with Poland.<sup>99</sup> Polish activists were predictably keen to portray the entire Polish-speaking population as having always already been on the “right” side of the war. A Polish army organized in the final year of the war to fight alongside the Allies in France served as a useful symbol of this ostensible affinity. Of the 70,000 men who eventually served in this formation, a large majority was actually composed of émigré volunteers from the Western hemisphere (the United States, Canada, Brazil). But the roughly 17,000 recruited from among prisoners of war provided a plausible basis for a narrative in which Poles serving in German uniform had deserted at the first opportunity in order to fight instead alongside the French and British.<sup>100</sup> This narrative was in turn connected up with post-war frontier struggles. In 1920, during an uprising by Polish insurgents in the run-up to a frontier plebiscite in Upper Silesia, fliers targeted at Allied peacekeeping troops pointed to war-time

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<sup>99</sup> Czapliński, 214-6. Korfanty had led an earlier revolt, in 1903, against Napieralski’s moderate leadership of the Polish movement in Upper Silesia. Napieralski had been able to recover his dominant influence in the region in the years before the war, even purchasing the newspapers that Korfanty had used to promote his cause. For the details of this long-term rivalry, see Bjork, *Neither*, chapters 2 and 3.

<sup>100</sup> Kaczmarek, 358-9; Eichenberg, 64.

defections by Polish-speaking German soldiers in claiming that the Poles, French, and British had always really been fighting on the same side.<sup>101</sup>

But if Polish participation in the German war effort very quickly shifted from seeming the most practical and high-profile form of national activism to seeming an embarrassment and an irrelevance, it could nonetheless not be forgotten. Across Europe, after all, veterans and widows of those killed in combat expected state acknowledgment of their sacrifice, not only, or even primarily, through monuments or commemorations but through provision of financial benefits to those who had made such sacrifices. For the new Polish state to have disavowed such obligations would have amounted to a form of self-delegitimization. Indeed, the holding of a frontier plebiscite in Upper Silesia meant that hundreds of thousands of Polish-speaking German citizens might reject affiliation with Poland altogether if Poland did not promise to provide benefits to veterans of the German army. Such considerations played a crucial role in the ultimate awarding of substantial benefits to the vast number of so-called “zaborcy” (a reference to the partition zones), who had fought in one of the imperial armies during the war. They were made eligible for payments only modestly lower than those provided to veterans of the Polish military.<sup>102</sup> The fact that some of those lobbying for such benefits fought in the post-war Polish uprisings as

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<sup>101</sup> Cited in Edward Mendel, *Polacy na Górnym Śląsku w latach I wojny światowej: Położenie i postawa* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Śląsk, 1971), 103.

<sup>102</sup> Veterans of the imperial armies received benefits in the range of 50 to 75 percent of the earnings of civil servants, while Polish veterans received benefits in the range of 60 to 80 percent. Eichenberg, 145-7. On the role of the Upper Silesian plebiscite in shaping policy on veterans' benefits, see *ibid.*, 138-9.

well as in the German army during the war made it a bit easier to sell the policy in “patriotic” terms.<sup>103</sup>

If the sheer ubiquity of service in the imperial armies made it impossible to ignore these experiences at the level of post-war public policy, it also made it an unavoidable part of post-war narratives of everyday life. Everyman autobiographies enjoyed great popularity in independent Poland, and among the most widely read was that of Jakub Wojciechowski (*A Worker's Own Life Story*), which won a national competition in 1923 and was published in 1930. Wojciechowski was a native of the Posen region who had worked as a migrant labourer in Germany and had also been conscripted into military service before the war. He was then called back to duty at the outbreak of the war, at the age of twenty-three. His account of service in the Germany army illustrates the possibilities, but also the difficulties, of narrating such experiences in Polish-patriotic terms. A running theme of these sections of the autobiography is the tension between action and sentiment, between Wojciechowski's immediate experiences and his feelings about them. He repeatedly emphasized his sense of alienation from Germany and the reluctance of his participation in the German war effort. But only occasionally did he describe moments of outright defiance, as when he wrote on an examination, administered by a German officer, that Martin Luther was a “traitor to the Catholic faith.”<sup>104</sup> More often, what

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<sup>103</sup> Jan Karkoszka, a native of Nowy Bytom and veteran of both the German army and the Polish uprisings, was a leader in both Polish veterans' organizations and international veterans' organizations. Ibid., 121-2.

<sup>104</sup> Jakub Wojciechowski, *Życiorys własny robotnika* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1930), anecdote on p. 300.

Wojciechowski conveyed was a sense of helplessness at events unfolding around him. He recounted, for example, his horror as a German officer shot a Belgian priest who, the officer claimed, had been trying to seize his weapon: “I, as a Catholic, had to watch this.”<sup>105</sup> Just as he found himself uncomfortably attached to a German war effort with which he did not identify, Wojciechowski lamented his inability to participate in the construction and defense of the Polish nation with which he did identify. Fighting for Poland against the Soviet Union, he wrote, was a “holy obligation,” unlike his unjustified service for Imperial Germany.<sup>106</sup> And yet Wojciechowski never did fight for Poland; he only moved to the new Polish state in 1924.

This gap between the normative history of “Poland” or “the Poles” on the one hand and the actual experiences of an “average Pole” on the other certainly did not preclude a degree of effective national inclusion in the interwar years. As can be seen in the celebration of everyman biographies such as Wojciechowski’s and in the provision of benefits to hundreds of thousands of *zaborcy*, the new nation-state managed to embrace as authentically Polish those who fought for the imperial powers during the First World War. But this remained a highly asymmetrical and limited form of inclusion. Whereas a tiny minority could think of their wartime actions as having shaped Polish history, thus meriting commemorative inscriptions on memorials like the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the vast remainder could only view

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 358.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 388-9.

their experiences as picaresque tales, featuring service in the wrong armies and fighting on the wrong side of the wrong battles.

In West-Central Europe, and to some extent in Russia as well, discussions of patriotism in the First World War tend to be based on an assumption of continuity, of a certain stability in the relationship between family histories and national narratives. A “patriotic” memory of the war, in other words, involves a father, grandfather, or great-grandfather fighting in the uniform and the flag of the country of which one is currently a citizen. This model is of little use in trying to understand the experiences of most inhabitants of East-Central Europe. The empires for which millions of men had fought had collapsed by November 1918, leaving veterans to try to make sense of their wartime experiences in the context of new citizenships in new states. This essay has explored in some detail the experiences of one sub-group of this vast population-- Polish-speaking citizens of the German empire—with the aim of sketching out productive approaches to this broader phenomenon of tracing patriotism across national rupture.

One predictable theme has been the difficulty of distinguishing “patriotism” from mere compliance or an abstract sense of duty to recognized authority. If we accept, as some contemporary observers did, that passive submission to existing authorities and following orders constituted sufficient evidence of state patriotism, then this kind of patriotism can be seen as ubiquitous among the Polish-speaking population of the German empire, as well as the Habsburg and Russian empires. A “pure” form of Polish-national patriotism—refusing to serve in or defecting from imperial armies; fighting in identifiable Polish units—was, in turn, relatively rare. The picture changes, of course, if one takes into account expressions of sentiment, whether reluctance in participating in imperial war efforts or sympathy for Polish-national



aspirations. Such sentiments are not only a staple of retrospective memoirs published in independent Poland but are also frequently evident in wartime diaries and correspondence. Rather than privileging either behaviour (often undertaken under varying degrees of duress) or sentiment (often detached from direct experience) I have argued for keeping a variety of possible understandings of patriotism in play, moving between them in order to examine the nature of different relationships to Germanness and to Polishness.

This kind of navigation is perhaps easiest to imagine as a private matter, an attempt by ordinary people to reconcile the apparently incompatible demands of rival ideological programs while maintaining some sense of stable personal identity. But as we have seen, individual-level wrestling with German and Polish orientations played out against a rapidly evolving geopolitical landscape. The prospect of German victory and the construction of a German-dominated Mitteleuropa created an opening for the revival of an autonomous Polish state on the territory of the old Russian partition zone. Polish publicists such as Adam Napieralski argued that support for the German war effort could dovetail with promotion of Poland's national resurrection, generating suspicions on both sides that one national interest was being manipulated on behalf of the other. While German military defeat doomed this attempted collaboration by the autumn of 1918, it was until then not only a viable initiative but arguably the most realistic attempt at German-Polish post-war conciliation. The promotion of such a vision by one of the most successful publishers in the Polish speaking world no doubt shaped the realm of the imaginable among the Polish-speaking public, both among Napieralski's long-time readership in Upper Silesia and in the new markets of the Congress Kingdom. Rather than being incompatible with Polish patriotism,

cooperation with the German war effort was plausibly presented as a prerequisite for it.

Perhaps the most interesting dynamic connecting the high politics of the *Katolik* camp with the views expressed by ordinary Polish-speaking German soldiers in letters and memoirs is what might be described as a kind of “virtual patriotism,” a collective identification that was largely detached from, rather than built on, everyday experience. Both high-profile Polish publicists such as Napieralski and ordinary Polish-speaking soldiers such as Wallis or Iwicki or Wojciechowski were deeply embedded not only in power structures of the German state but also in a German cultural sphere. They spent much of their time promoting the German war effort and speaking German with German colleagues. But each of them also became, in various ways, invested in the development of a Polish national community that was geographically anchored in the Russian partition zone, far from their homes. They thus developed something of an emigré or diaspora relationship to the Polish nation-building project, albeit more unstable and ambivalent because they still understood their home territories (especially Posen and West Prussia, but also Upper Silesia and East Prussia) to be both genuine Polish land and the territory to which their own destinies were tied. Polish-speaking German citizens, in short, were not simply engaged in a fight for a foreign (German) patria between 1914 and 1918, followed by a fight for their “real” (Polish) patria from November 1918. They found themselves engaged with both German and Polish fatherlands throughout the period, and it was not always clear, either at the time or in retrospect, in what ways and to what degree either patria was their own.